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AUTHOR Dehouske, Ellen
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ABSTRACT

The role of spontaneous story writing in the education of normal and emotionally troubled students is examined. A review of the theoretical and research base touches on the value of fantasy production in language development, self exploration, and problem solving. Classroom application is examined in terms of the need for a facilitative environment, the teacher's role as listener and model, and the benefits of the students feeling accepted and understood. Illustrations are provided of stories written by a disturbed adolescent who learned to express herself and to feel a sense of belonging with other students. Appendixes provide information on sample story making activities. (CL)

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ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PROJECT OF PENNSYLVANIA

LISTEN TO THE STORY:
USING SPONTANEOUS STORY-WRITING WITH STUDENTS

ELLEN DEHOUSKE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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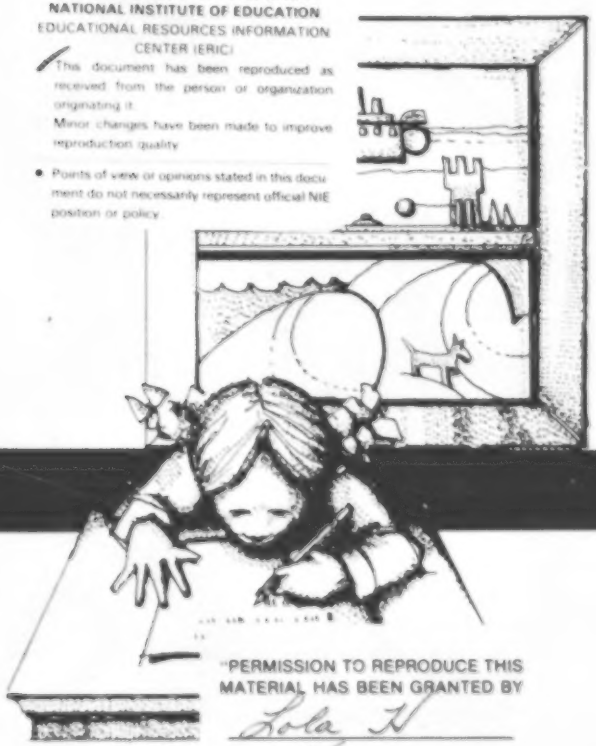

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ELLEN DEHOUSKE

Ellen Dehouske has been an English teacher for 11 years and a special educator employed for seven years by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh to work with emotionally handicapped adolescents in language arts. She has used creative writing within the context of the language arts curriculum. Ellen holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Education, Higher Education Program, with an emphasis in college teaching and child/adolescent development. She has developed a program to train teachers to facilitate students' self-expression through story-writing. Additionally, Ellen provided training through Health and Welfare PLANNING Association to staff members who work in Title XX day care programs. One area of emphasis, here, is art and play for self-expression. Also, Ellen has published several articles about the use of creative writing with emotionally handicapped students.

Presently, she provides educational-developmental consultation to special education teachers at the Psychiatric Association for Consultation and Therapy in Pittsburgh; teaches a course, "The Adolescent Learner," at Point Park College and serves as a creative writing consultant for the Arts in Special Education Project of Pennsylvania.

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Introduction: Developing the Story-Making Potential

> There are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before.
>
> — Willa Cather

Each of us has a story to tell. We tell it over and over for others who will listen. Throughout history, literary forms such as myths, legends, fairy tales, fables, and parables, just to name a few, have communicated the universality of the human condition. Literature is psychology dressed up in human clothing. Because of this, it is much more tolerable and pleasurable for us to hear. After all, we all enjoy a good story.

While there are many aspects of creative writing that touch upon process and product as well as form and style, the emphasis of this paper is on spontaneous story-writing. The word, "spontaneous," is used in reference to the content presented in the stories. The overall, prescribed, organizing structures are presented to the students, but the content of the story is determined by the student on the spot. For example, the student may be asked to write a story using a four-block form. However, what the student writes about is the student's spontaneous response. Spontaneous story-writing tasks are brief exercises that stimulate the creative process. In a sense, the can be precursors to the polished, finished product.

This type of activity is perceived to be a part of all school programs—not to replace other language arts programs but rather to be integrated within and embellish these programs. It is a concept which, when implemented, affords teachers another tool to strengthen students' written language, general communication skills, symbolic representation, understanding of others, and self-esteem as well as pleasure with self-expression and story-sharing. Ultimately, this type of program can be adapted to all ages, types of

students, and varieties of classroom settings. For example, for the non-writer, it becomes story-telling.

Teachers and students in general will be addressed in this paper. Certainly special education teachers and their students bring some unique dimensions to their interactions. Teachers are quite skillfully trained to address those. This paper will present a technique that can be generalized to all classrooms for everyone enjoys a story. I leave it to teacher-experts to tailor the concept to their specific students although some guidelines will be indicated.

There are many kinds of stories such as those that describe events that have happened. However, this program taps into the student's capacity to fantasize, to pretend, to make-believe, and to imagine. Along with all the other potentials that teachers help students develop, it also is important to help students develop their make-believe potential. One valuable consequence is that students can learn to discriminate between such concepts as real and pretend; wish and expectation; anticipatory planning and acting out; thought and action.

Theoretical Overview: Fantasy Activity

Teachers are very good at discovering successful and innovative techniques that work in the classroom. Experience and training have taught them a great deal. However, it is always good to discover that their creative and innovative techniques are rooted in research and theory as well. This serves at least two purposes: Teachers can feel more confident about their activities, and teachers have more credible information to share with the public in order to strengthen their positions. We need this. Therefore, both a theoretical perspective and an experiential base will be presented here.

Creating stories involves fantasizing, and fantasizing involves cognitive processing. Cognitive theorists have helped us to recognize, consciously, that we all fantasize and that it can add numerous, positive elements to the life of children, adolescents, and adults. Fantasy activity is being highlighted by contemporary theorists as a frequent, productive, integrating, planful activity that is important to the day-to-day growth, development, and social maneuvering of all persons.

Symbol-making and abstracting are two examples of cognitive processing involved in fantasizing. Also, fantasizing can help develop problem-solving skills—playing with possibilities, exploring alternatives, and anticipatory planning (Klinger, 1977; Singer, 1973, 1974).

Fantasy activity is a way people can process information for self-direction, self-awareness, and self-communication (Klinger, 1977). Those persons who use fantasy activity constructively tend to be more reflective persons (Singer, 1973). Also, fantasy can be used to help people change to a more positive mood when they find themselves in an unpleasant yet temporarily inescapable situation (Tomkins, 1965).

When people learn to use fantasy activity constructively, they also can learn to imagine instead of acting out (Ekstein, 1966). Ego

psychologists such as Erikson (1963, 1968) and Sutton-Smith (1971) define several ego-supportive aspects of fantasy through children's symbolic play. For example, play can provide a child with attempts to gain mastery over traumatic situations, to create modeling experiences, and to construct the world according to the child's personal perception. Certainly reflective thinking, planning, positive mood change, and imagining rather than acting out are important social, personal, and emotional skills to develop in students.

Piaget (1962), Singer (1973), and Klinger (1971) suggest that the child's fantasy play evolves into the adult's refined planfulness, problem-solving, and symbolic thinking. The fantasy activity of children aids the movement toward higher cognitive development as it helps children assimilate new information (Piaget, 1962). The symbolism of make-believe activity in children can help bridge the gap between the concrete experience and abstract thinking (Piaget, 1962). Adolescents' creative and personal writing, drawing, cartooning, and daydreaming, for example, are perceived to show the transition between externalized fantasy play and internalized fantasy thought (Singer, 1966; Klinger, 1971).

Research: Fantasy Production

Research has described the early home environment of high fantasizing persons. High fantasizing children seem to have a strong identification with at least one parent and have experienced a home environment that fosters and models fantasy activity (e.g., reads stories aloud, encourages imaginative play) and encourages private times (Pulaski, 1973; Gottlieb, 1973; Biblow, 1973; Singer & Schonbar, 1961). Certainly this gives some clue to the type of classroom atmosphere that supports fantasy activity.

High fantasizers who use fantasy in a positive way seem to be divided into two types: those who exhibit interpersonal curiosity predominately, and those who exhibit non-personal, problem-solving, objective curiosity (Singer & Antrobus, 1963). This finding is important for it suggests the constructive use of fantasy in order to look into ourselves as well as to problem-solve about the world around us. The research identifies the positive use of fantasy as well as the more traditional, negative fantasy of highly distractible, preoccupied people with patterns of fearful, guilt-ridden, poorly controlled, and often body-centered fantasies.

Research has described a number of positive personal, social, and cognitive outcomes of fantasy production. High fantasy seems to correlate significantly with introspective skills when the fantasy is owned by the person and predominately positive and problem-solving in tone (Singer & Schonbar, 1961; Singer, 1966, 1973, 1974). Fantasy activity seems to facilitate the socialization process also. High fantasizers are reported to exhibit better waiting ability, higher frustration tolerance, increased concentration, and longer delay of gratification (Singer & Schonbar, 1961; Pulaski, 1973). They also seem to experience a greater sense of personal control over situations (Pulaski, 1973).

Fantasy activity can facilitate adaptation skills. It can provide for rehearsing and replaying events as well as anticipating future events (Singer & Antrobus, 1963). High fantasizers appear to ex-

hibit more flexibility in adapting to new situations (Pulaski, 1973). They also seem to use fantasy activity to decrease aggression and to alter affect more positively while low fantasizers seem to exhibit no change or an increase in aggressiveness and angry affect (Biblow, 1973).

Fantasy activity seems to correlate significantly with development of language skills (Singer & Antrobus, 1963). The story-writing of high fantasizers tends to be more elaborate and have more imagery (Pulaski, 1973; Gottlieb, 1973; Singer & Schonbar, 1961). There seems to be more flexibility and variety of response (Dansky & Silverman, 1975; Pulaski, 1973). High fantasizers are reported to use verbal expressions of aggression while low fantasizers reportedly use motoric ones (Biblow, 1973).

While the research is in an exploratory stage, the literature does make a case for the development of constructive fantasy production in people. In fact, research suggests that systematic training can develop some positive uses for fantasy activity in children with problems (Gottlieb, 1973; Freyberg; 1973; Nahme-Huang, Singer, Singer & Wheaton, 1977). An environment that supports fantasy production seems to be one that recognizes the need and provides the time for fantasy, provides fantasy models and systematic training, and, importantly, provides the message that fantasy activity is valued.

The research findings suggest significant implications for teachers of typical and atypical children and adolescents. Fantasy can be a useful cognitive activity for self-exploration, examining people-relations, exploring options, designing, and problem-solving. It also can help to alter mood in a more positive direction. Pretending can be a way to safely distance one's self and play out important, personal themes. Imagining can provide practice in responding innovatively. Fantasy can provide pleasure and enjoyment. Traditional, formal school activities are important, but so are opportunities for self-expression through fantasizing. Fantasizing can help students develop cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

Students, like all people, fantasize whether or not they are given permission. The story-writing program is one way to elicit fantasy and provide a constructive structure (story-making) for the process. There is no guarantee that the fantasy elicited from the students will be positive in content. Not all fantasy is positive. Not all constructive fantasy is totally positive in tone either. Nevertheless, when students' fantasy is presented over time, teachers can respond empathically to the feelings expressed through the stories. Also, teachers can model more constructive perceptions, attitudes, coping skills, and problem-solving strategies.

Practical Application to the Classroom

Teachers may be most familiar with acting in direct ways in the classroom. While these direct behaviors can be most expedient in some classroom situations, it also is important for teachers to develop their indirect and facilitative behaviors. There are times to be direct and times to be indirect. A balance between both is necessary. In order to encourage students to begin to develop their creative and self-expressive potential, teachers need to act in indirect and facilitative ways (Weinstein & Fantini, 1970; Wittmer & Myrick, 1974).

Research has clarified some key components that are indirect and facilitate fantasy production. These components include exposure to a person who recognizes the need for imagining, who encourages private times, who fosters and models fantasy activity, and who communicates the message that pretending is valuable and important. The teacher's own enthusiasm for creating stories is paramount to the success of this program. Accepting and valuing each student's story-writing product is vital. Teachers must enjoy the story-making process and product as they gently guide students through the steps of story development.

These are some indirect teacher behaviors that facilitate fantasizing. They are indirect because the behaviors do not demand fantasizing; they merely set the scene for imagining, pretending, and making-believe. Within the classroom, then, key indirect teacher behaviors that facilitate fantasizing include setting up a nourishing environment, listening attentively, questioning sensitively, and modeling fantasy production.

THE FACILITATIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

It is assumed that the classroom is physically and psychologically safe for all students and that students feel safe there. Also, the classroom environment needs to represent nourishment. Especial-

ly when being involved in creative, self-expressive activities, students need to feel nourished (Weinstein & Fantini, 1970; Wittmer & Myrick, 1974; Aspy & Roebuck, 1977; Seaberg, 1975). Teachers are good nourishers. The nourishment can range from, and include, encouraging words, a gentle touch, a cup of tea, and a cookie. No matter what the form of nourishment is, it is to be given freely and unconditionally. Students don't earn nourishment: They earn grades.

Each teacher can determine what nourishment is reasonable in that class' environment. Whatever the specific techniques, the message to the students will convey, "I like you." "I accept you." "Try." "What you have to say is interesting and important to share." In this way, teachers communicate respect, value, and acceptance of students. Teachers begin to build rapport and establish trust so that students begin to express themselves through stories. Teachers model a low-keyed style of interaction that nourishes, encourages introspection, and facilitates self-expression.

While grammar and the mechanics of accurate writing are very important, they are not emphasized during these spontaneous story-writing times. Again, this is a time to develop self-expression. If grammar and spelling block the student from writing, teachers can reassure students that mechanics are important and they will learn them, but right now it's okay to just tell a story.

THE TEACHER AS LISTENER

Attentive listening is a critical precursory behavior to acting in ways that are indirect and facilitative during self-expression. Listening is an important skill for positive interpersonal communication (Carkhuff, 1973). Listening well initiates positive, constructive communications between people. Admittedly, there are additional skills necessary in order to sustain successful interpersonal communication over time (such as responding empathically; personalizing problems; heightening understanding; exploring, planning, and initiating more constructive actions). However, listening is a key skill necessary in beginning the process of self-expression through stories.

During spontaneous story-writing activities, teachers listen to cues from their students and redirect them into developing stories. Some students can go right to the task of story-creating. Others need teachers who can reassure them that they have fine stories to tell and who can elicit those stories from the students. This process of eliciting stories involves open-ended questioning of students in a low-keyed, private, nonthreatening, and encouraging manner.

Open-ended questioning is an important component in listening well (Carkhuff, 1973).

In story-writing, questioning students is done to elicit information and supply an organizing form. Teachers encourage students to pretend and imagine as they tell about the character, setting, happenings, and resolution. Teachers encourage elaboration by asking about more detailed information. Teachers may even act as secretary temporarily and record the information in sentence form. Specific techniques for questioning in story-telling are described elaborately in other resources (Gardner, 1971; Irwin & Malloy, 1975; Irwin, Rubin, & Shapiro, 1975; Dehouske, 1980). However, here are a few suggestions.

The teacher can encourage students to create increasingly elaborate stories by using general comments such as "Tell me more." "And then what happens." "Use lots of words to tell how the character looks...how the setting looks." For students who need more assistance, the teacher can, in a low-keyed, quiet, and gentle manner, ask open-ended questions.

Appendix A suggests skeleton questions for the teachers to know and ask in a casual, clarifying fashion. For example, "Where could your story take place?" "Well what kind of day is it?" "Can you use words to say what it looks like outside?" Teachers can provide the clarifying structure but students determine the content. If a student responds with "I don't know," the teacher can respond with "Of course you don't know. It's only a story. It's only pretend. What could it be like for a story?" Whatever words the teacher uses, the message always conveys the concept that students have wonderful stories within them and the teacher will gently help give them form.

Certainly careful listening and questioning are skills, like all other skills, which require practice, time, and hard work in order to master. Yet the pleasure of nurturing self-expression through story-writing in students is more than sufficient reward. Teachers can learn to develop better listening and questioning skills so that they can elicit information to redirect it into stories. The specific activities that follow are tasks that can be used in order to initiate story-creating with students once a safe, nourishing classroom environment is established and when teachers' listening and questioning skills complement the tasks.

CLASSROOM TASKS

It is important for teachers to maintain a nurturing classroom climate, generate a tone of enthusiasm and encouragement, and

gently move students forward to more complex, elaborate, subtle, and sophisticated stories, over time. The story-making progession is from simple to more complex, brief to more elaborate, and highly structured to less structured.

The ultimate goal of this type of program is that students write a spontaneous story, one or two sides of a paper in length, after being presented with a brief cue such as a picture or a general topic. However, the program provides students with a step-by-step procedure in order to develop the necessary skills.

The developmental progression includes the movement from drawing to words as well as from one word answers to phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. It is suggested that teachers begin this program on the level that is easy, comfortable and fun for the students. Then the teacher can move students forward to more challenging tasks with more demanding expectations for elaboration and intricacy after students are "hooked in" to the pleasure of story-making.

Students are expected to write stories privately or with the teacher's low-keyed and gentle assistance. The story-making tasks present an external, organizing structure. Teachers reported that it was helpful to allow students to do drawings, illustrations, and thumbprint characters in order to warm-up to writing (Dehouske, 1981).

Appendix B presents an organizing structure and asks for brief answers to guided questions. It also allows for sentence and paragraph formation if the student is ready. Teachers know their students and can determine this. A thumbprint character, using ink pad or water colors and fine point markers, can provide a nonthreatening way to do an illustration.

Appendix C presents a four-block organizing structure with cue words for story development. Space is provided for illustrations to represent the information described in each block. Sometimes, doing a group story is a good model initially. In this case, the format is written on the blackboard and the teacher is the guide who elicits responses from the group, brainstorms for options, records choices, and reads the emerging group story aloud. Afterward, each student writes her/his individual story.

Appendix D presents a six-block story structure. Students can be encouraged to add more detail and do more illustrations. Students also can be asked to use Block 4 to present three choices showing how the character might consider solving the problem, before moving into the resolution. Also, morals can be asked for at other times. Appendix E shows an outline for helping students formulate morals.

The forms are used as many times as are necessary in order to guide the students through the process and help them internalize the structure. Over time, students internalize the concepts of characterization; sequencing; logical progression from the beginning through the middle and to the end; elaboration through detail; and generalizing through a moral.

Initially, some students may be very dependent on the teacher in order to organize, clarify, make choices, and pretend. Over time, students will become quite independent in story-writing for they will gain confidence in their own abilities to create stories.

Students can be presented with general categories of topics as well. For example, animals, sea creatures, lines, shapes, and musical instruments can be named as topics. At other times, caves, underwater, mountains, and outerspace can be named as settings. Students are encouraged to include a beginning, middle, and end as well as "lots of words" to describe the story. Students are encouraged to make choices regarding the content, themes, settings, characters, problems, and outcomes. Again, the student who is blocked and says, "I don't know," is gently encouraged to try, to pretend, to make-believe, to imagine. Of course the student doesn't know: It's only pretend! It's only a story!

FEELING CAPABLE OF BEING UNDERSTOOD

It is important for all people to be listened to, feel understood, and feel accepted by someone. The handicapped person may feel particularly alienated from others due to the person's perceived (and rooted in reality) distancing from others, whether accidental or intentional (Laing, 1966). The handicapped person, like all people, needs someone to tell her/his story to—someone who will listen, empathize, accept, and understand. Over time, then, the handicapped person can feel understandable, feel a sense of belonging, and move on with life (Laing, 1966).

Stories lend themselves nicely to this task because everyone communicates symbolically and indirectly (Gardner, 1971; Irwin & Malloy, 1975; Irwin, Rubin, & Shapiro, 1975; Dehouske, 1979). Over time, students and teacher alike come to know and understand each other better, yet this is accomplished slowly, indirectly, and tolerably—and in an entertaining fashion.

Hearing the symbolic communications of students' thoughts, feelings, fears, and wishes can enable teachers of handicapped students, particularly, to move beyond the limitations of a diagnostic label. The teacher and the other students can modify their perception of the handicapped student. The handicapped student

can be perceived to be increasingly understandable, tolerable, and acceptable in a human way. Research with teachers documents this (Dehouske, 1981). In Wolfenberger's (1972) sense, each student can be recognized and valued as a person just "like you and me."

Therefore, students are encouraged, but not pressured, to read their stories aloud. Sometimes, it is good for students to write a story and share only with the teacher. However, in order to increase students' understanding of each other and enjoyment in each other's story-making, stories are encouraged to be read aloud. Spontaneous story-writing lends itself to this because one class period, for example, is the time boundary. The class time is used to write stories privately and to read them aloud. Teachers reported that, when students heard each other's stories, over time the students became more understanding and supportive of each other and this carried over to other classes (Dehouske, 1981).

TEACHERS PARTICIPATE AS STORY-WRITERS: TEACHERS CAN ACT AS MODELS

The teacher also has a simply written, non-competitive story prepared to share with the class. All class members are asked to listen to the stories presented. The teacher models listening, enjoying, valuing, respecting, and accepting each student's efforts. Sitting in a circle can facilitate equality and sharing among students and teacher. By the way, students also indirectly model, among other things, elaborate description, coping skills, perceptions, and problem-solving skills, as they share their stories.

Teachers have an additional, very important role in writing their own stories: to embed a positive, constructive message in their stories. Therefore, teachers will tell a story of hope, faith in people, faith in one's self, and the importance of having a purpose in life. For example, stories can reflect issues such as the value of stopping to think before acting; the need to work hard in order to improve; the need to face fear in order to overcome it; the need for doing things that are fun in order to balance out the hard work; the right to feel anger yet find constructive ways to deal with it; the need to build a network of loyal friends—whatever is needed. Teachers are the adults. Teachers are sensitive to students' needs. Teachers can embed these constructive, hopeful, faithfilled, directed messages, indirectly within their stories.

The goal is not to negate the students' feelings nor to negate the hard work involved. Yet it is imperative to present more positive and hopeful resolutions that support the student's confidence, capacity

to learn better ways, and enjoy the pleasure in accomplishing goals. Richard Gardner (1971) so beautifully described this process in the mutual story-telling technique that he designed and uses in therapy with children.

Gardner (1971) asks children to pretend that they are a television guest invited to tell an original story with a moral. He then uses the child's story as the vehicle to respond to the child therapeutically. Gardner (1971) retells the child's story using the same character and conflict, but he reworks the story in order to present healthier patterns of response and a more constructive moral.

Teachers can modify this to the classroom in order to respond to the global human concerns presented by their students. Teachers can build the egos of children by presenting stories with more constructive problem-solving skills, coping techniques, and resolutions as well as more accurate perceptions.

For example, if many students write stories about characters who feel as if they are all alone, the teacher can respond with an encouraging story. One illustration could be:

THE STORY

Once upon a time there was a snail. This snail was named Sam. Sam was young and alone. He felt terrible. He didn't know what to do. But he decided that sitting doing nothing was accomplishing little. He was sick and tired of feeling alone and feeling sorry for himself. Well, Sam began walking. He walked at a snail's pace, you know! But that's as it should be: You see, he was a snail. That was okay. You see, he got to feel the warm sun and feel each step of the earth beneath him. He could really enjoy the brush of the grass and breeze from the trees. He could enjoy the warmth of the sun. Sam was walking and wondering what a snail should do next. Along came another three snails. They all said, "Hello." They talked some. They enjoyed each other. The visitor snails said that they were going for a snail's-paced hike! They invited Sam to join them. Sam agreed and smiled to himself. Yes, this was the beginning of something good.

A note of caution: Teachers, like most people, tend to be action-oriented. However, there are times to be reflective also. This story-writing process is slow, indirect, and reflective. Teachers cannot model until they have listened carefully, sensitively, and over time. The process cannot be hurried. The richness lies in the way that students evolve, develop, and grow, and the way that teachers respond, sensitively, cautiously, and judiciously. Teachers have to come to enjoy the unfolding process and nurture an environment that encourages and sustains self-expression while they become increasingly skillful at modeling indirectly through stories.

A Case Illustration

These stories were written by Diane, fourteen, an adolescent student in a special classroom setting for emotionally troubled students. Diane had a solid frame, was somewhat overweight, and acted overpowering. She often wore tight-fitting clothes and high-heeled slides. Diane had noticeably bleached, blond hair, wore black eye make-up, and had watery, huge, sparkling blue eyes. She often distanced people by acting loud and raucous. Diane had a history of delinquent behavior that resulted in numerous institutional placements. She could act defiant, belligerent, and intimidating. Yet there was something magnetic about her to other people, both peers and adults. Diane began story-writing with this story:

AN EXCITING VACATION

We finally got enough money to go on vacation, so we decided to go to Hawaii. It was so beautiful there until the night we slept out by the volcano.

It was really nice outside so me and a couple of friends of mine decided to go out and sleep on the beach. We were out on the beach partying when all of a sudden we heard a great roar from behind us. We all turned around and saw this hot lava coming out of the volcano. It was flying everywhere and coming down towards us very quickly. Everyone started to run towards the water but this one dude fell and the lava just swallowed him up. When we heard him scream it only made us run faster. No one even turned around cause we knew what had happened to him.

We finally made it to the water and swam up shore to where we were safe.

The next morning we left Hawaii never to return there again.

Diane wrote these stories and read them aloud over six months as all class members did. We enjoyed her stories. We enjoyed all the stories. These are Diane's second and third stories:

STRANGE LAND

One day I woke up and I was in a strange land. It had red grass and blue trees, but there was never any daylight. All day long the moon would glow an eerie shade of green.

I got up and looked around. At the top of this huge mountain there was an old castle. All of a sudden a man with wings came flying down and grabbed me and he carried me all the way up the mountain to the castle. When he put me down I started to run. Everywhere I ran these demons tried to get me. Finally, they all grabbed me and brought me into the castle. They said they were bringing me to their king. The second I laid eyes on him I knew I was dead. I knew I would have to spend an eternity in hell.

A CHANGE IN LIFE STYLE

One beautiful day in Detroit, there lived a caterpillar, a bee, and a gangster. Now, let me tell you about this gangster. He went around robbing everyone in sight and he was the richest man in town. So every night he would be out gambling.

The bee and caterpillar had a problem. They needed some money and were sitting in on this card game and saw how much money the gangster had so they robbed him. In the end, the gangster saw how bad he felt when he was robbed so he went out and killed the bee and the caterpillar. Took his money off of them, then gave the money back to the people he had robbed and gave up his life of crime.

We thanked Diane for sharing her stories with us. We thanked each other. Diane continued writing stories. These are her fourth and fifth stories.

TOYS

After we destroyed the earth there was just an empty planet. But one day a family of crooked lines came to visit our dead world. They went around making crooked lines all over the earth. Till one day when it was raining, some straight lines came falling down from the sky. The straight lines told the crooked lines that there must be something wrong with them. So they tried to straighten them out. But it wouldn't work so the straight lines and the crooked lines got together and made some people to play with. That is how the second start of the human race came. Just because some straight lines and crooked lines wanted something to play with.

SNOW WHITE

Once upon a time there was a girl called Snow White. She lived with her step mother until the mirror told her step mother that Snow White was prettier than her. So her step mother made her leave so Snow White went out into the woods and lived with the 7 little pigs. The evil step mother knew that she was still alive but didn't care because Snow White had eaten so much when she was with the 7 little pigs that she ended up looking like a pig.

Diane wrote her sixth and seventh stories. We were amused yet saddened by some of the characters' predicaments.

THE KING THAT DRANK TOO MUCH

Once upon a time there lived a king who was a fine man. Everyone in the kingdom loved him, and respected him until he started to drink too much. He would be out all night drinking and running around. So the queen left him. But he didn't even care he would just keep on drinking and having wild parties in the castle. Until one day, one of his jealous girl friends came over and killed him for fooling around with other women. So the king didn't die from drinking, he died from fooling around.

THE RABBIT WHO LOVED CARROTS

Once upon a time there was a rabbit. This rabbit really loved carrots. He loved them so much that all he would do all day long was sit in his hole and eat carrots.

He lived in the hole with his mother and father and his brothers and sisters. They all have been outside their hole but he hadn't. He didn't know what the real world even looked like. The rabbit was happy just to sit at home and eat carrots all day.

Till one day his whole family was killed in a hunter's trap. So when his carrot supply ran out, he had to go get some for himself. He had just come out of his hole when a cat came walking along and ate him. The rabbit should have come out and learned about the world so he would have known to run from the cat.

In her next story, Diane beautifully communicated with us on the importance of listening. We thank her, enjoyed the story, and pondered...

TREE'S TALK

One day I was sitting up in an apple tree, and I heard the tree talk to me. It asked me how its apples tasted. You know that was the first time I ever realized that a tree would never know how its fruit tasted. I sat up in that tree all night and we talked. I told it many things that it never knew, and it told me many things about nature. That tree had been there for hundreds of years and was very old and wise. It had told me stories of all the people who had climbed up him. But then he said that I was the only person who ever heard him talk. He told me that everyone else who climbed him never listened closely enough when his leaves rustled in the wind.

So next time you are up in a tree or walking past one, listen, it might be trying to tell you some of the secrets of the world.

Diane helped us to get in touch with our sadness at the injustice of some things. And we shared our stories with her too. Diane wrote this story four months into the school year.

ROCKETS

It was the day for the rocket to take off. I had been a janitor there for many years, and I was inside the rocket cleaning, when I hit a button in the control panel by mistake. The door slammed shut. Me and my dog, Elmo, were trapped inside.

The rocket started to take off and I thought me and Elmo would die. But several days later we found ourselves on a strange planet. We got out of the rocket and all of a sudden this bacteria attacked us and started to eat away our skin. I ran back inside the rocket. Then I realized that I left Elmo outside. I opened the door up to get him but he was being devoured by the bacteria and it was too late to save him.

So I got in the rocket and headed back to earth. I was half eaten by the bacteria. All my skin was gone. When I got back to Earth I was so relieved. They opened the rocket door and said something about a monster, then they shot me.

Diane continued to write stories, as we all did. We were entertained and enjoyed the humor. We were moved by her strength and her compassion.

A TRIP TO FANTASY ISLAND

I had finally arrived on fantasy island. I got off the plane and everything looked so beautiful. There were these girls there when I got off the plane who gave me flowers and a nice cold drink.

Then I talked to this strange man about my fantasy. He said that it could be done easily.

So the next thing that I knew, I was in the middle of a tropical jungle on a tiger hunt. This tiger had eaten my husband several years ago and I was determined to kill him.

We were in the jungle for many days before we had found the tracks of the tiger. When we found the tracks I knew that he would die soon. Cause I could just imagine myself pulling the trigger and watching him die.

A week later I had found the tiger, but he had been wounded badly. He was caught in a hunter's trap and if he was there for a couple of days longer he would die. I wanted to shoot him so bad but then I looked at the tiger. It looked as if he was asking me to help him. I hated him so much, but then I realized that killing him wouldn't bring my husband back. I kept looking at the tiger and he looked at me as if to say he was sorry. So I walked over and set him free. He could have killed me if he wanted to but he didn't. I learned something very important on my vacation. I learned not to hate.

THE WILD DRESS

One day Mrs. Smith went into the store to buy a new dress. She saw this one dress that she really liked alot so she bought it.

Mrs. Smith was going to a big ball with her boyfriend. They were out dancing and having a good time when the dress just jumped off her and left her there naked in the middle of the floor. Mrs. Smith was so embarrassed. She went chasing her dress through the whole place then finally she caught it and put it back on.

Mrs. Smith had left the Ball and she was very humiliated. As she was walking down the street her dress jumped off her again. So Mrs. Smith just gave up and joined a nudist colony.

Moral: Don't put on a new dress without using deodorant.

Many things happened during those six months but one most

wonderful thing happened: All of the class members grew to love Diane very much...And Diane grew to show her gentle self along with her strength. Here is one of the last stories she wrote before being discharged from this setting.

THE EVIL PIRANHA

The piranha is a very mean fish. All he does all day is go around and look for something or somebody to eat up. I'm going to tell you a story about this one particular piranha. He was so mean that he ate his own mother and father 5 minutes after he was born.

Now this one lady fish liked him and he kinda liked her so he ate her.

After a while he got kinda lonely cause all the lady fishes were scared to go near him cause they knew all that he wanted to do was eat them.

So he put a lock on his jaws but that didn't work cause he started to starve to death. So he got a brilliant idea one day to become a vegetarian. So he did and grew up, got married, and had plenty of baby piranhas. Moral: Don t eat everybody you see or else no one will come near you.

I leave it to you to hear the beautiful, gentle, loving, frightened, kind, strong, etc., etc. young human person beneath the sometimes loud, belligerent, overpowering student.

A closing comment is suggested from the story-making experience. With time and sensitive listening, all of us can come to realize our commonality with others and emphasize this. After all, realizing our sameness provides the bind that allows us to feel a sense of belonging. From this sense of belonging, each person then can develop and flourish in her/his unique way as well. We humans need both. We must never be frightened to hear the human story. After all, it is each of our stories and all of our stories. We must listen and applaud the strength and courage, acknowledge the sadness yet share the hope, embrace the vulnerability, delight in the human experience—and renew our belief in people and ourselves.

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Appendices

The usage of these forms is described within the article. They were developed by the author, and originally appeared in her manual, *Listen...and I'll Tell You My Story*, 1980.

The forms have been reduced in size for this publication—they are ordinarily presented on 8½" x 11" paper. You are invited to enlarge and duplicate these for use in your classroom.

APPENDIX A

Student's name_____
Date_____

MAKING A LONG STORY

Answer these questions. Then write a story using your answers. USE LOTS OF WORDS AND DETAILS.

Setting:

1. Where does the story take place?_____
2. What time of day?_____
   _____
3. What does it look like?
   _____
4. What are the weather conditions?_____
   _____

Character:

1. What is the main character?_____
   -Name?_____
   -Age?_____
   -Looks?_____
   _____
2. What does the character do most of the time?
   _____
3. What does the character like to do?_____
   _____
   Why?_____
4. What does the character hate doing?_____
   _____
   Why?_____
5. How does the character feel most of the time?
   _____
   Why?_____

Character (continued):

6. How does the character feel once in awhile?_____
   Why?_____
7. What is it like being that character?_____
   _____

What's Happening:

1. What is happening in this story?_____
2. Give 3 details about what is happening:_____
   _____
   _____
3. How does the character feel about this?_____
   Why?_____

The End:

1. How does the story end?
   _____
2. Give 3 details:_____
   _____
   _____
3. How does the character feel?_____
   _____
   Why?_____

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APPENDIX B

illustration

Cartoon Thumbprint—Describe A Character

Its name_____

What is it?_____

Where does it live?_____

What does it look like?_____

_____

Its favorite food?_____

What does it do that is not fun?_____

_____

What does it do during the day that is fun?_____

_____

Make up at least <u>three</u> sentences about the thumbprint cartoon character. Make up some interesting facts about it. What does it like and dislike? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now, write this over into a story. Make it long. Make it fun to read.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

turn this over to continue your story ◊

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TITLE: "_____"

ONE_____

IN_____

LIVED A_____NAMED_____.

BY_____

NOW, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT_____.

_____LIKES TO_____.

_____DOES NOT LIKE TO_____.

_____.

AND WHAT HAPPENS TO_____IS

_____

_____

_____

IN THE END,_____.

_____.

NOW_____FEELS_____

BECAUSE_____.

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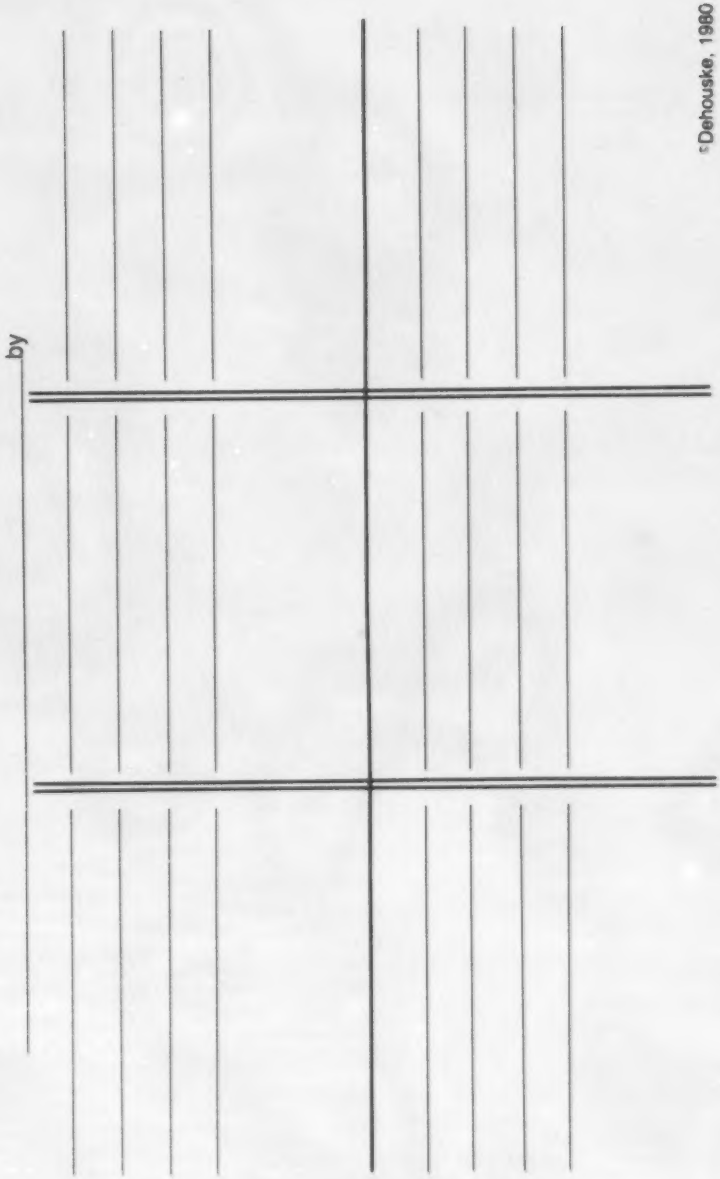
APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D



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APPENDIX E

Creating a moral

Talk about what a "moral" is.

On the blackboard, practice these formats:

Always (do this) and (this) will happen.

Never (do this) or (this) will happen.

If you (do this), (this) will happen.

Don't (do this) or (this) will happen.

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236 Union Deposit Mall • Harrisburg, PA 17111
717-564-7798

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